

HAMPTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
MINUTES
June 17, 2008

Budget Committee Members Present:

Mary-Louise Woolsey, Chairman
Michael Plouffe, Vice-Chairman
Richard Nichols, Selectman Representative
Rusty Bridle, School Board Representative (7:15)
Victor DeMarco
Maury Friedman
Dick Hansen
Eileen Latimer
Jack Lessard
Michael Pierce
Norman Silberdick
Larry Stuker
Peter Traynor

Excused

Pat Collins

Chairman Woolsey called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Chairman Woolsey introduced the members of the Committee.

Approval of Minutes – May 20, 2008

Moved by Mr. Plouffe, seconded by Mr. Hansen, to approve the Minutes of May 20, 2008.

Vote: 9 yes, 0 no, 3 Abstentions (DeMarco, Hansen, Silberdick). Motion passed.

Chairman Woolsey welcomed Fred Welch, Town Manager, and Hank Lipe, Chief of the Hampton Fire Department, to the meeting. She said this meeting was looking towards a bond issue proposal for the Fire Department for 2009.

Chief Lipe said he had been thinking about what has to happen in the next few months for this to be successful. The first objective is proper communications with the Budget Committee, the Board of Selectmen and the public. The input received shows that it is necessary to do a better job in communicating exactly what the project is going to be. It is important that this is started immediately.

Chief Lipe went over the components of what the fire station must be. It is a building with many purposes. It houses vehicles and stores large fire equipment. It houses employees 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and provides for their safety, quarters and hygiene. It also has to be a business office and a headquarters. It is an educational facility and has to have opportunities for training. It must be a workshop for taking care of a fleet of vehicles. It has to be a medical care facility for walk-ins. And finally it is a benchmark for the community.

Chief Lipe said there have been many proposals, but the building has to have those components. Size, looks and location can be debated, but not functionality. Chief Lipe said his objective is to get the Budget Committee to support a fire station in 2009.

Mr. Welch said that the Town has reached the point where there is an old fire station on Winnacunnet Road and a station at the beach, both of which are much too small for our needs. This is going to create problems. Flooding at the beach station is a major problem. A new station is needed that will last at least 50 years.

Mr. Welch mentioned ISO ratings. If something is not done this will be a problem.

Chairman Woolsey said it was her understanding that the Selectmen have decided to focus on Station 2. Mr. Welch said that was true.

Chairman Woolsey asked about making the new fire station “green”. Mr. Welch replied that they will be looking at this as they go through the process.

Mr. Stuker asked about the various guidelines that must be adhered to. Chief Lipe discussed all the codes that must be met in building the new fire station.

Mr. Silberdick said that future plans have to be cognizant of the pocketbooks of Hampton voters.

Chief Lipe said that each time the Town delays building a station, the cost goes up. The size of the station cannot be reduced because of functionality.

Chairman Woolsey asked how much it would cost for the architects. Mr. Welch said approximately \$250,000.

Mr. Hansen said he understood the concerns for a fire station with adequate facilities. The problem is that it has to be at an acceptable cost to the taxpayers. All the codes may not be able to be met. It is necessary to be practical. Chief Lipe said he would not condone a facility that does not meet all code requirements.

Chairman Woolsey asked Mr. Welch if the length of the bond had been discussed. Mr. Welch replied that he would recommend no less than 25 years.

Chairman Woolsey said that if the Level 3 ISO rating is lost, everyone's homeowners policies will increase dramatically.

Mr. Traynor asked how close that rating is to being jeopardized. Chief Lipe said he will find out in the next month or so.

Ms. Latimer asked what is necessary to get the voters to approve. Chief Lipe said there has to be a good plan supported by all entities. Support must begin now.

Ms. Latimer said this is not an issue of what we "want", but what we "need". She asked if there were going to be other departments in this building. Chief Lipe said he doesn't know at this time.

Mr. Pierce said he wanted this building to be "energy conscious" with heated floors, etc. Chief Lipe said he was scheduled to meet with the Town Energy Commission. Mr. Pierce asked about grants. Chairman Woolsey said the Energy Commission might have some insight on that.

Ms. Latimer said it might be possible to qualify for a grant for the elevator. Chief Lipe said it is possible that some monies might come from other sources (Homeland Security, etc.).

Mr. DeMarco asked if the fire station came in at \$4 million what the interest would be. Mr. Welch said he did not know for sure. Mr. DeMarco said he would guess it would be about \$300,000 per year and this would not really be a large factor, approximately 15 cents on the tax rate. Mr. DeMarco said the Budget Committee should support this and sell the program.

Mr. Friedman said that in order to get a new fire station you have to get the voters to approve. The question is what is the perspective of the voters. The voters feel that over the years this Town has not done some things well. Some people feel that the fire station and police station should be together and share some duties. We need to get the Town to approve some savings in other areas to make up for this money.

Mr. Lessard said this must be gotten together, a dollar figure must be reached, then take it to the voters.

Mr. Stuker said he hoped the Committee could go on the record and support the recommendations of Chief Lipe.

Mr. Bridle said he doesn't want to do what was done before – trying to save money and ending up with a building that is too small. Mr. Bridle said you cannot compare Hampton to other towns. It is different and the cost of services is different.

Mr. Nichols said the Selectmen have set a goal of 15 warrant articles.

Mr. Plouffe said concentration should be on the fire station itself. The other departments need to be separated. Adding these inflates the cost of the fire department. Something that will serve the Town is needed, not another bandaid.

Chairman Woolsey said she agreed that the total focus should be on the needs of the Fire Department itself. It is necessary to remember that this is an emergency service. There has been a history of neglecting municipal buildings and forcing employees to work in substandard conditions. All of our emergency departments deserve to have decent facilities. The critical need to do this needs to be explained to the public.

Moved by Mr. Stuker, seconded by Mr. DeMarco, that the Budget Committee endorse a proposal to build a new fire station uptown at the same location which includes the functionalities outlined in the Chief's presentation to the Budget Committee on June 17, 2008.

Vote: 13 yes, 0 no. Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Woolsey thanked Mr. Welch and Chief Lipe for their presentation.

School Research Sub-Committee

Mr. Pierce said he wanted to thank Mr. Gaylord, the three principals, the special needs person and the Chief Financial Officer for meeting with the sub-committee.

On May 2, the sub-committee met at the Hampton Library. The last ten years of school reports were reviewed, the mission statement discussed and there was a general exchange of what and how to proceed to accomplish the mission.

On May 9, Mr. Pierce and Mr. Silberdick met at the Library. School budgets were examined and the highlights were put into an Excel spreadsheet for a final report to the Budget Committee.

On May 16, the sub-committee met with Superintendent Jim Gaylord, Hampton Academy Principal Christopher Sousa, Centre School Principal Nancy Andrews, and

Special Education Director Sara Stetson. Rusty Bridle was also present. The discussion covered many general areas and there was a lot of input from the participants.

On June 2, the sub-committee met with Superintendent Gaylord and staff named above. The Special Needs details were a new learning experience. This was a very productive meeting. Met again with Mr. Gaylord and staff on June 9 and continued going into detail with the current budget.

Ms. Latimer said that school enrollment seems to be going up. Mr. Silberdick said the sub-committee will be involved with the School Budget Committee.

Mr. Pierce said he requested enrollment data and related information in person at Sacred Heart School on May 12. On May 20, he made a follow-up call for the above requested information. On June 2, Mr. Pierce said he stopped by Sacred Heart again and the Principal, Mrs. Smith, told him he was not going to receive the requested information.

Information being requested was:

1. How many of Sacred Heart's students are from Hampton?
2. What is the total student enrollment at Sacred Heart?
3. How many other towns contribute to Sacred Heart besides Hampton?
4. How many special needs students attend Sacred Heart?

Mr. Pierce said that after his meeting with Principal Smith, she sent a letter to Fred Welch indicating that her staff felt threatened. He then asked the Budget Committee to assume responsibility for obtaining this information from Sacred Heart School.

Chairman Woolsey read Principal Smith's letter to Mr. Welch. In the letter Ms. Smith states that it was her understanding that if the town needed information about Sacred Heart School, they would receive a request from a town official in writing.

Chairman Woolsey then read a draft letter she wrote to Principal Smith explaining about the sub-committee. She explained that the members were sworn elected officials and are entitled to ask for any information they deem necessary to complete their task.

Mr. DeMarco said that the petitioners should be the ones questioned, not the school itself. Chairman Woolsey said that in this case, we are dealing with public money and they need to be accountable.

Mr. Traynor said Chairman Woolsey's letter was appropriate.

Moved by Mr. Stuker, seconded by Mr. Traynor, to direct a letter on behalf of the Budget Committee to Ms. Smith with the wording at the beginning of the second paragraph of Chairman Woolsey's letter changed to read "Since the petitioners" rather than "Since Sacred Heart School", to obtain the requested information.

Vote: 9 yes, 3 no (DeMarco, Friedman, Lessard), 1 abstention (Pierce). Motion passed.

Selectman Report

Mr. Nichols said the Selectmen met with the legislative delegation. It is still possible that Hampton may again become a donor town. A watered down pension plan has passed. Mr. Nichols said it appears the Town is doing very well with the budget so far this year.

School Board Report

Mr. Bridle said that today was the final day of school. There is a new Facilities Committee which will study the Junior High School.

Old Business

Chairman Woolsey said at the last meeting the Committee took a vote to ask the Board of Selectmen if they would agree to cooperate with the Budget Committee on a request for a legal opinion from the LGC regarding agreements/contracts. Chairman Woolsey said she did not continue with this. There is no manual for the collective bargaining agreement process in the statutes. It would be very difficult to get any kind of decision. Chairman Woolsey said she had discussed this with Mr. Lally and Mr. Welch. The problem last year was the lack of clarity at the end of the collective bargaining process. The tentative agreement process is what is being done now.

Chairman Woolsey said the Selectmen have the sole right to do the collective bargaining with the unions. The Budget Committee and public have no right to interfere. What the Committee is looking for is a clean, visible process. It is necessary to know when the unions ratify and when the Selectmen ratify. The Budget Committee will then agree to accept the CBA warrant articles to review for a recommendation to the public hearing and Deliberative Session.

New Business

Chairman Woolsey said that Maury Friedman has set up a meeting on July 15 for a work session with Jean Sams from the Department of Revenue Administration. Mr. Friedman will inform the Committee of the time at a later date.

Hampton Budget Committee
June 17, 2008
Page 7

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Mr. Lessard **moved**, seconded by Mr. DeMarco, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Rice
Secretary

Mary-Louise Woolsey, Chairman